

## THE THIRD PARTY COALITION OF WASHINGTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

8 September 2010

*The following media release was originally distributed on 1 June 2010 to media outlets throughout the state of California as voters there were deciding the issue of a Top-Two Primary. The Third Party Coalition of Washington re-issues this media release in anticipation of the visit to the state of Christina Tobin, Founder and Chairman of the Board of [freeandequal.org](http://freeandequal.org) who will be holding a press conference on Thursday, 9 September 2010 in Washington State. To find out more information, contact her at: [christina@freeandequal.org](mailto:christina@freeandequal.org), visit their website at [www.freeandequal.org](http://www.freeandequal.org), or call 1-312-320-4101.*

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### The Top Two Primary System in Action -- The Experience of Third Parties in Washington State

The original Primary System in the state was the classic "blanket" Primary in which voters could select among all candidates at will, with the highest vote recipient in each party moving up to the General Election. This provided equal access for all political parties and independents, by simply following the ballot access rules. For whatever reason, this very equitable process was deemed to be unworkable and replaced with another system.

This new "Pick-a-Party" Primary System effectively forced the voting populace to choose between being a Republican or a Democrat in order to have a voice. The voter was asked to sign an oath stating their intentions to vote for one of the two major parties. The voter would then select one of two ballots to fill out -- one for Republican or one for Democrat -- plus one for non-partisan offices and issues. This was designed to benefit the major parties by preventing "cross-over" voters from one party trying to skew the election for the other party. This limited the voter from exercising his or her right to vote for the candidate of their choice since 3rd Party and Independent voters were eliminated from the process.

The Top Two Primary System was originally viewed as a viable option to the "Pick-a-Party" Primary System within the state, but sad experience has shown us that the Top Two Primary is a deceptive practice. While it does make access to the Primary ballot quite easy for 3rd Parties, it effectively blocks access to the General Election, by limiting ballot choices to only the top two vote getters in the Primary election.

Here's how it works:

- A candidate from any party, or an independent, simply files and pays his or her filing fee as prescribed by law;
- A candidate states in the voter's guide and on the ballot that he or she "prefers the Green Party" or "prefers..." whatever party one prefers, but does not need an official party endorsement to use the name of a given party as a preference.
- The election is held and the top two vote getters, no matter party preference move on to the General Election.

What could be wrong with this plan? Let the experience of the Constitution Party of Washington be your guide. Under the laws of the State of Washington, if a "Minor Party" earns 5% of the vote for a statewide office in a General Election, they become re-classified as a "Major Party." In 2008, the Constitution Party of Washington's candidates for State Auditor and for Secretary of State each received over 6% of the vote in the Primary Election. They were prevented from moving to the General Election by the Top Two Rule. Had they been able to do so, they were well positioned to achieve the 5% requirement for the Constitution Party of Washington to achieve "Major Party" status, for voter turnout is generally expected to be higher in the General Election than the Primary, especially in a presidential year, which it was. This same situation would apply equally to all 3rd Party and Independent candidates.

The ultimate result of the Top Two Primary System is that there are no longer any "Minor Parties" officially recognized by the State of Washington. The Secretary of State's website only lists two political parties as existing in the state, Republican and Democrat. A visitor to the website will not be able to locate any other party as existing within the state. When questioned about it by the Constitution Party of Washington, Carolyn Berger from the Office of the Secretary of State sent this reply,

*"As a result of approved Top Two Primary legislation, which gives no specific way to identify minor parties, we now only have contact information for the Democratic and Republican Parties on our website. The Washington State Public Disclosure Commission, I believe, tracks "political action committees."*

So there are officially NO "Minor Parties" in the State of Washington, only "Political Action Committees".

**Let me reiterate this FACT, the result of the Top Two Primary System is the systematic elimination of any choice for voters other than Republican or Democrat in the General Election, unless a "Minor Party" can overcome one of the two "Major Parties" in the Primary!**

We, The Third Party Coalition of Washington, by sad experience, do hereby URGE California voters to vote NO on PROPOSITION 14, if they wish to retain their constitutionally guaranteed right to vote for the candidate of their choice in each and every election!

Signed,

American Heritage Party of Washington

Paul McClintock, Chairman

Constitution Party of Washington

Robert W. Peck, Chairman

Karen Y. Murray, Vice-Chairman/Communications Director

Libertarian Party

Rachel Hawkrige, Chair

Progressive Party of Washington

Linde Knighton, Chair

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